



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

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**Monday, October 27, 2008**

**6:00 PM**

**City Municipal Bldg, 295 Meridian Street**

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**SPECIAL MEETING**

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.*

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent.*

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**2008-0011 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2008 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

*See City of Groton Committee of the Whole minutes of 10/27/08.*

**2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study**

**Discussed**

*See City of Groton Committee of the Whole minutes of 10/27/08.*

**2008-0243 Reuse of Colonel Ledyard School**

**Discussed**

*See City of Groton Committee of the Whole minutes of 10/27/08.*

**2008-0247 Budget Guidelines for FYE 2010**

**Discussed**

*See City of Groton Committee of the Whole minutes of 10/27/08.*

**2008-0262 Charter Revision - Discussion**

**Discussed**

*See City of Groton Committee of the Whole minutes of 10/27/08.*

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.*

**JOINT  
CITY OF GROTON/TOWN OF GROTON  
SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2008**

**CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
6:00 PM**

**Mayor Popp called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.**

**I. ROLL CALL**

Present: Mayor Dennis Popp, Deputy Mayor Paul Duarte, City Councilors Hubert Poppe, Celeste Duffy, Marian Galbraith and City Clerk Debra Patrick.

Town Mayor Harry Watson called the meeting to order and gave the roll: Councilors Deborah Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, James Streeter, Kathryn Brown-Tracy, Rita Schmidt, Catherine Kolnaski and Town Manager Mark Oefinger present.

Absent: City Councilors David Hale and Michael Street, Town Councilors Heather Sherman Bond and Paulann Sheets.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. THAMES STREET REHABILITATION STUDY**

Councilor Schmidt reported that the business owners and residents were not in favor of Thames Street being a one way.

Councilor Galbraith reported that they voted to maintain the 2 way street which means a reduction in parking spaces and they will now have to determine the most cost effective way to re-build the retaining walls.

Town Councilor Sheets arrived at 6:10 p.m.

There was continued discussion on how the residents were against the one way plan.

Councilor Brown-Tracy asked if Thames Street had ever been a one way street.

Mayor Popp said they are behind by about 3 months with the whole one way issue. He said they have a great deal of work to do with decisions on the sidewalks, intersection treatments and retaining walls.

Councilor O'Beirne asked what the time frame might be.

Mayor Popp said he expects to have a good cost estimate in March or April and can bring it to the Town Council by April or May to prepare for the November ballot.

Councilor O'Beirne asked if there were any more "emotional issues" associated with the project.

Mayor Popp said he believes that the one way street was the only real impediment of that kind. He said the motel that had been proposed between Ledyard Avenue and Smith Street is on hold for now due to Zoning issues.

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Councilor Duffy reported that the Costa Property Committee has been looking into the possible uses for the property on both the east and west side of Thames Street. She said there will be a public meeting on December 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building where they will welcome public comment and participation.

Councilor Streeter said he had received a number of calls with concerns about the historical value of the property and he referred them to the Costa Committee.

Councilor Streeter asked what progress, if any, had been made with the Syragakis properties.

Mayor Popp said he did meet with him and at this time there are no firm plans.

Councilor Streeter said he asked only because he didn't want to make all these improvements if the possibility existed that buildings would be torn down.

Mayor Popp said that the rehabilitation plans also include some sidewalks on Bridge Street.

**B. COLONEL LEDYARD SCHOOL**

Town Manager Oefinger said there is a storage needs study for the Board of Education currently under way. He expects a draft of that study to be available in early December. He went on to say that he expects the primary use of the school will be for storage. He said at one time they considered using the school as a temporary Senior Center or to be used for Town of Groton Recreation programs.

Mayor Watson said that due to height constraints they are not ideal for storage.

Mr. Oefinger said that schools are not ideal storage facilities due to code issues.

There was discussion regarding the City's interest in Colonel Ledyard School.

Councilor Schmidt asked if there were any deed restrictions.

Mr. Oefinger said there did not appear to be any restrictions. He said the location does not lend itself to many uses.

There was discussion on the City's need for additional office space

Mayor Watson said that Board of Education member Beverly Washington will be addressing the storage needs issue at the Town Council meeting October 29<sup>th</sup>. He asked if there was a time frame the City had in mind.

Mayor Popp said the City is bursting at the seams and has had an architect working on what can be done at the municipal building to create new office spaces in the auditorium and remodeling in other parts of the building. He said the building is 40 years old and there has been tremendous growth in that time. He said that Colonel Ledyard School would be a good fit for the City.

Mayor Watson said that they could pull Colonel Ledyard School from the storage study and discuss it at a Town Council meeting in executive session. He said that once it is turned over to the Town he will see to it that it goes on the agenda for early December. Councilor Sheets said that she would not like to see the auditorium here downsized since it is a great resource for the whole community.

Mayor Popp said it seems to be a great resource for all of South Eastern Connecticut but absent any other buildings the needs of our business here in the City have to be considered. He asked if there has been any interest by developers in the William Seeley School.

Mr. Oefinger said there had been some interest to the Board of Education. The Town does not own it, the Board of Education does.

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**C. BUDGET GUIDELINES FYE 2010**

Mayor Watson said they will be discussing the budget at their regular meeting tomorrow night so it might be premature to go into it tonight.

Mayor Popp said with the Governor calling for a special session in November to discuss the shortfall on the State level and its impact locally we need to stay on top of it. He said they will have to look at what will need to be done to get level service and funding. Once the State makes its cuts in the budget we can look a little further ahead.

There was some discussion that a number of legislators will not be serving beyond the current term that not much will get done at this special session. There were also concerns on cutting services when people need it the most. There was discussion that they hope to be meeting with the State delegation on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

**D. CHARTER REVISION DISCUSSION**

Mayor Watson asked Councilor O'Beirne to take the lead on this item.

Councilor O'Beirne said he wanted to address any concerns City residents may have regarding the proposed Charter Revision.

Mayor Popp said that there was only one point that he had heard any comment about. It is regarding the authority of the Town Manager, upon request of the Town Council, to comment on or review City budget items.

Councilor O'Beirne said that the section of the proposed Charter reads as follows: "Upon the request of the Council, the Town Manager may provide comments on the budget estimates." He went on to add that it codifies what has happened all along, and it allows for input on the budget estimates by the Town Manager not control.

There was discussion on the input by City residents during the charter revision process.

Councilor Poppe supports the retention of the RTM over referenda for passage of the budget. He has concerns that the Town Manager would be consulted about the City budget submitted. He hoped that an open dialogue between the Town and City would be preferable.

Mayor Popp said that he believes that it would not be a problem, that if the Town Council had questions or concerns about the City budget they would ask the City representatives.

Councilor O'Beirne said the intent was only to determine the impact on the Town budget.

Councilor Streeter said the budget presentations by the City has worked in the past.

Councilor Kolnaski said that they have always felt they could get all the information they needed during discussions.

Mayor Watson suggested January 13, 2009 at Town Hall Annex for their next meeting.

**E. OTHER ITEMS**

Councilor Poppe asked if Plant Street was going to be paved this fiscal year.

Mayor Popp said they put it off due to new construction that will be starting. He said new construction means cuts in the road for Utilities so it is best to wait.

Councilor Poppe asked about the sidewalks on Thomas Road.

Mayor Popp said we have gotten to the sidewalks on Shennecossett Road.

Mr. Oefinger said they are working on grant money for the Thomas Road sidewalks.

There was discussion on the trenches dug in the pond in Washington Park. It is to help with drainage so they can mow. There was discussion on whether it would help with

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freezing for ice skating. Temperatures notwithstanding there are issues with the salt that drains in the pond off the roadway that prevents it freezing enough for ice skating.

Councilor Sheets distributed pamphlets on foreclosures.

There was some discussion on SWCA and who can serve on the board or the authority.

Discussion on when to schedule the next joint meeting. It was decided that 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall Annex January 13, 2009 would be best.

**III. ADJOURNMENT**

**Councilor Galbraith** moved **Councilor Kolnaski** seconded a motion to adjourn. **Motion carried.**

**Mayor Popp and Mayor Watson adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

**APPROVED:**

**Debra Patrick  
City Clerk**